GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
RAILWAYS
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:42
ANSWERED ON:03.03.2005
BANERJEE COMMITTEE REPORT ON GODHRA FIRE INCIDENT
Owaisi Shri Asaduddin;Sujatha Smt. C.S.

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a High Level Committee under the Chairmanship of Justice (retd.) U.C. Banerjee, constituted to inquire into the incident of fire on Sabarmati Express at Godhra station, has submitted its interim report to the Government;

(b) if so, the facts and details of recommendations made therein;

(c) the names of persons and railway officials found guilty for the incident;

(d) whether the present report is contrary to previous reports submitted to the Government by different investigating agencies;

(e) if so, the main differences between these reports;

(f) whether the Government has taken any meaningful initiative in order to ensure impartial probe to put an end to paradox arising out of probe report of Banerjee Committee and Nanavati Commission;

(g) if so, the details thereof; and

(h) the final view taken/proposed to be taken by the Government on the Banerjee Committee report?

Answer

MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD)

(a) to (h) : A statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (h) OF STARRED QUESTION NO.42 BY SHRIMATI C.S. SUJATHA AND SHRI ASADUDDIN OWAISI TO BE ANSWERED IN LOK SABHA ON 03.03.2005 REGARDING BANERJEE COMMITTEE REPORT ON GODHRA FIRE INCIDENT

(a): Yes, Sir.

(b): Conclusions and observations of the interim report are as under :-

(i) The fire on Sabarmati Express on 27th February, 2002 cannot but be ascribed to be an accidental fire which engulfed the coir, the foam and the latex available on berths coupled with the luggage of the passengers causing thereby the smell of burning and thereafter dense smoke culminating into leaping flames and not a deliberate attempted event.

(ii) There has been a preponderance of evidence that the fire in coach No.S6 originated in the coach itself without any external input.

(iii) The question of any miscreant activity does not and cannot arise.

(iv) All is not well with Railway Safety as they should be in their approach in order to avoid any further untoward incident like the present one.

(v) There has been failure on the part of the Commission of Railway Safety and Railway Administration to conduct a statutory inquiry into this accident.

(vi) The response of Godhra Fire Brigade was not satisfactory.

(vii) Failure of Government Railway Police has also been adversely commented.

(viii) Role of Railway Administration has been adversely commented for :-

(a) Not making any concerted efforts to preserve clues of the incidents.

(b) Not giving due importance to this railway accident as this was considered to be a miscreant activity by Railway Administration without any inquiry.

(c) Discrepancies in record keeping.

(d) Not following up the specified practices at the time of railway accident like certification of track and coach fitness.

(e) Failure of Railway Protection Force (RPF).

(c): No individual has been found guilty for the incident.

(d) & (e): No other inquiry report from any other investigating agency has been submitted so the question of contradiction does not arise.

(f): Nanavati Commission appointed by Government of Gujarat is yet to submit its report. There is, therefore, no question of any paradox.

(g): Question does not arise.

(h): No final view in this matter can be taken as this is an interim report.